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ABSTRACT

The age of accountability in higher education is here, but there has been virtually no development in educational systems that has encompassed the task of producing a performance-based college campus. In order to accomplish the necessary goal of developing subsystems which together constitute a performance-based system, it is necessary that college faculties and administrators develop measurable objectives for every program, level, and service. Miami-Dade Community College, South Campus, undertook such an effort in five phases. Phase 1 involved the development of measurable objectives and support service on campus. Phase 2 involved developing course objectives and service objective statements and distributing them to advisors, faculty, and students. In Phase 3, procedures were developed for evaluating the degree to which students or other groups achieved objectives. Phase 4 involved the statement of measurable objectives for every level of management. In Phase 5, a system of mutual determination of objectives for faculty and administration was developed. These objectives form a 1-year plan of action and constitute the basis for written performance evaluation. (KM)

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THE PERFORMANCE-BASED CAMPUS: HOW TO BUILD A TOTAL SYSTEM

By

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THE PERFORMANCE-BASED CAMPUS: HOW TO BUILD A TOTAL SYSTEM

In recent years the educational enterprise has grown enormously in both size and cost. Education as an investment has surfaced as a major budget consideration at local, state and national levels. During the decade of the 60's, the combination of increased cost, widespread confusion and social disruption in higher education caused a severe decline in public confidence. Loss of public confidence led to renewed questioning of the purposes of the educational enterprise and brought the demand for educational accountability into sharp focus. Unfortunately, demands for accountability could not be met by educators who were ill-prepared to state, in behavioral terms, what objectives the educational enterprise sought to achieve, what alternative methods might be employed to achieve those objectives or how to evaluate the extent to which any objectives were achieved on the part of the students. Former Commissioner of Education, James Allen, observed: "The people have a right to be assured that the increasingly large investments in education that will be called for will produce results. They can no longer be expected to be satisfied with definitions of school quality that focus primarily on such factors as per-pupil expenditures, teacher-pupil ratios, and teacher salary levels." It is clear that the age of accountability in higher education is upon us and that, thus far, the systems which we have produced are not adequate to meet the demands of an aroused public and its elected representatives.

The literature of professional education today abounds with terms such as "behavioral objectives," "performance objectives," "competency-based education," "measurable objectives," "systems approaches to education,"

"management by objectives," and "administration through objectives." While there exist some vestiges of common meaning within the various terminologies used, there is also great confusion. Vagueness and ambiguity plague the language of performance-based education. Referents of words and phrases are frequently obscured, and most of the phraseology is devoid of any indication of the scope of the educational enterprise which is under discussion. Analysis of the language produces little that is compelling and one is provided the opportunity to develop his own phraseology.

Systems-thinking in education has been traced from Harbart and Leibnitz (Barbee, 1972, (p.58) through Charters, Silvern, Wolfe, and Stolurow (ibid, pp. 58-62) and still there has been almost no development which has encompassed the task of producing a performance-based college campus. In fact, Barbee (ibid, pp. 70-105) has described recent attempts at developing systems approaches and concluded,"No institution is directly employing a systems approach to either overall institutional development and operation or to instruction on an across-the-board basis." (ibid, p. 107)

Any attempt to develop or describe the performance-based college campus involves a complex challenge and a rare opportunity: a challenge in the sense that, at least in the judgment of some, no such organization has been developed and an opportunity in the sense that the relatively short history of performance-based education allows for almost complete freedom in design and development of a system. The challenge is real and complex enough to render one awe-stricken.

Despite the long history of education there are still three important questions about the educational enterprise that have been left unanswered: (1) What changes are sought in the behavior of students; (2) How are those changes to be achieved; and (3) How are teachers to know when the changes

have been achieved? On the other hand, a strong tradition of individualism in educational content and methods has developed in such a way as to confuse hopelessly attempts to separate educational objectives from educational strategies. For example, if we ask the typical college faculty member what objectives he is trying to achieve, he will very likely provide us with a description of the activities in which he engages. This confusion of strategies with objectives is one of the major reasons why it is so difficult to achieve meaningful and major changes in the educational system. After all, if a faculty member equates his strategies with his objectives, then discussion of possible changes in education imply changes in his strategies which may be interpreted as criticisms of his performance or be assumed as threats to his academic freedom. If, however, differentiation between strategies and objectives has been accomplished and such objective statements have been defined, then faculty activities are properly considered as strategies and thus can be assessed as to their relative efficacy in achieving the stated objectives.

On the positive side of the effort to produce performance-based systems of higher education, Roueche and Pitman (1972), Cohen, et al (1971), Cohen and Brawer (1970), have contended that education must be based on defined measurable objectives if educators are to be accountable to themselves, to students or to the public. In addition, Bloom (1956), Krathwhol (1964) and Banathy (1968) have provided categories and suggested taxonomies for describing educational outcomes. Although these works do not offer the final answers, they do offer valuable assistance to those who are interested in designing performance-based systems of higher education.

While we may agree that the age of accountability is upon us, the community of educators does not agree on the wisdom of producing a

performance-based system of higher education. Perhaps the issues are nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the February, 1972, issue of "Educational Leadership" in which Gagné (pp. 394-396) presents an article entitled "Behavioral Objectives? Yes!" and Kneller (pp. 397-400) presents an article entitled "Behavioral Objectives? No!." Gagné contends that the statement of behavioral objectives is necessary in order to communicate expectations to students, to enhance design of the educational experience and to evaluate the outcomes of the educational enterprise. Kneller, on the other hand, contends that, "This approach to instruction rests on assumptions about human behavior that are reductionist, deterministic, and physicalist. It is opposed to the view that learning is self-directed, unstructured, and in large part unpredictable." Kneller (p. 397) concludes that the program of the behavior objectivist has very little place in education. These opposing viewpoints illustrate clearly that those who seek to develop performance-based systems in higher education will soon discover that the road is not charted clearly nor are sufficient models extant to the degree that much assistance may be provided.

From the foregoing analysis of challenges and opportunities, the conclusion can be drawn that many attempts have been made to provide the theoretical constructs and the specific categories necessary to the development of performance-based education; however, the conclusion that such a total system has been developed would not be warranted. It is necessary that the college campus of the future have clearly developed sub-systems which, taken together, constitute a performance-based system of education. In order to accomplish that goal it is necessary that college faculties and administrators develop measurable objectives for every instructional program, for every level of management, for every support service, and

that all college personnel make a mutual commitment to achieving those objectives. Despite all of the difficulties attendant on attempts to develop performance-based systems and despite the history of partial failure in previous attempts, the necessity for educators to seriously attend to the goal of developing performance-based educational systems remains compelling. In blunt terms, we will use our professional expertise to develop such systems, or they will very likely be developed by those who have less educational expertise and will be superimposed on the structure of higher education.

Keeping in mind the complexity of the educational enterprise, consideration of the strategy to be employed in developing a performance-based campus becomes of paramount importance. The remainder of this paper will be directed at describing an attempt undertaken by the faculty and administrators of Miami-Dade Community College, South Campus, to achieve the goal of developing a performance-based educational system.

As is the case in the planning and execution of any complex endeavor, it is necessary to develop the performance-based campus in phases. The question arises where to begin such development. There are two major beginning points advocated by those who write in the field: (a) begin with the top level of administration and proceed through the various levels of the campus to the courses and service areas; (b) begin with the courses and service areas and proceed through the various levels of administration to the top of the campus. We chose the latter.

The project was organized into five phases: Phase I involved the development of measurable objectives for every course and every service area (support service) on the campus. Phase II involved the restatement of specific outcome objectives in simple terms and the dissemination of those

statements to interested constituents i.e., course objectives statements were distributed to academic advisors and to students, service area objectives were distributed to faculty and to students. Phase III involved the development of procedures to evaluate the degree to which students, or other constituent groups, achieved stated objectives. Phase IV involved the statement of measurable objectives for every level of management on the campus. Phase V involved the development of a system of mutual determination of objectives for faculty, department chairmen, division directors, campus deans, and the campus vice president which form a plan of action for a specific period of time (one year) and forms the basis for written performance evaluation.

The need for expertise in developing measurable objectives and evaluation systems on the part of the campus staff is obvious. The need for a carefully structured process for approaching the enumerated phases is equally obvious. The campus approach to the development of the necessary expertise began with the appointment of a Steering Committee for the Objectives Project. Through a series of workshops, and much survey of the literature, the Steering Committee developed the expertise necessary to produce guidelines and formats for the implementation of Phases I and II of the project. Following that development, the Steering Committee members were reassigned to their departmental responsibilities and served as departmental experts and a professional staff was appointed to head the entire effort on the campus. That staff was assigned two roles: (1) to assist faculty and administration, upon request, with acquiring the necessary technical information so that a sufficient level of sophistication could be developed which would result in the writing of objectives in measurable terms; (2) to review the work products of faculty and administrators who

had been assigned responsibility for developing course and service area objectives so as to insure that the technical requirements of the published guidelines and formats had been followed. In addition, a committee made up of the coordinator of the objectives project, the campus deans and the campus vice president was constituted as a Campus Review Committee and charged with the responsibility for reviewing all packages of measurable objectives for substantive and technical requirements. The latter review was especially valuable in delineating areas of proliferation, overlap, duplication in the curriculum and in the support services.

To further elaborate on strategy, those who were charged with responsibility for any area of teaching or service were assigned responsibility for producing the measurable outcome objectives for that function. The process began with courses and service areas and proceeded to the several levels of management. Finally, the process for mutual determination of objectives, sometimes called mutual goal setting, was added as the capstone of the entire process. Apart from commitment on the part of the campus administration and staff to achieving defined objectives, adequate implementation of the performance-based system could not be assured. The mutual discussion and determination of objectives for faculty and administration, related to already defined objectives for courses and services, provided the driving vehicle and the cement of the system. Without some mechanism which cemented the respective sub-systems together into a dynamic relationship, measurable objectives and the evaluation plans were mere words on paper.

Considerable progress has been made in the development and implementation of all phases of the plan; however, we are nowhere near the end, hopefully, we will never be, since the total process provides a self-correcting

mechanism through which we may assess the cost, the quality and the quantity of our services to the students and the community. In fact it can be said, we have only just begun.

The performance-based campus offers significant benefits to those who successfully institute the concept, but attempts to develop the total system should be approached with caution. Those who would develop the performance-based campus should understand, at the outset, that commitment on the part of faculty and administration to the concept is necessary; that a considerable degree of expertise is required; that extensive time and money must be invested. Strong educational leadership is essential at every level of administration. Progress is slow and positive results are not immediately forthcoming. For those who persist, however, significant benefits to students, faculty and administration can be realized. Implementation of the system may:

1. enhance communication between and among faculty and administration;
2. assist in articulation between institutions of higher education;
3. encourage testing of the efficacy of instructional and administrative strategies;
4. provide a feedback loop upon which a self-corrective mechanism can be built;
5. surface constraints within and outside the system more rapidly;
6. provide for cost-effectiveness analysis of the campus operation;
7. free educational strategy and make time a variable rather than a constant.

The performance-based campus is not a panacea for solving all educational problems. Its principal strength resides in prompt identification and analysis of problems. As Walker has observed, "Education will always be in part an act of faith. But it does not have to be a leap in the dark. We can try to become aware of what we can and take the rest, hopefully a steadily diminishing range of considerations, on faith." (Center Report, p. 22)

The performance-based campus can serve to diminish the scope of considerations based on faith and increase the range of those based on evidence and logic.

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